

Colleagues,

As we move into items **7 through 10**, we are brought right to the heart of our Council Plan and its four strategic priorities: **providing affordable and high-quality housing, growing our economy, supporting communities for all, and responding to the climate and nature crisis**. Tonight's sequence of reports shows how our investment, our planning, and our financial choices knit together to deliver tangible progress against each of those priorities.

Item 7, on *Climate Programme capital workstreams*, demonstrates our continued leadership in responding to the climate and nature emergency. The proposals to invest **£700k in additional solar PV** across our estate and **£1.3m in replacing obsolete streetlights with LEDs** directly accelerate our decarbonisation pathway—cutting emissions, reducing energy costs, and building a resilient, modern public estate. These projects are not just technical upgrades; they are enablers of a more sustainable Dorset, supporting cleaner air, safer streets, and long-term savings that protect frontline services. This is climate leadership in practice. [1](#)

Item 8, the *Active Travel Infrastructure Plan*, strengthens our commitment to **communities for all** and to creating places where people can move safely and confidently. With more than **700km of walking, wheeling and cycling corridors assessed** and a prioritised programme of improvements, the ATIP will open up active, healthy, low-carbon travel for residents of all ages. It supports safe routes to school, improves independence for those without access to a car, and helps reduce congestion and emissions. Crucially, having this plan in place unlocks future Active Travel England funding—ensuring Dorset remains competitive when bidding for national investment. This is infrastructure that supports health, inclusion, and climate action side by side.

Item 9, on *Transforming Public and Community Transport*, speaks directly to our priorities around **growing the economy** and **strengthening communities**. Dorset's dispersed rural geography means we must think differently about mobility. Endorsing this strategic direction allows us to develop a Full Business Case for a modern, integrated system—bringing together public transport, school transport, community transport and demand-responsive services into a coherent network designed with and for our towns and parishes. This is a shift from fragmented provision to a genuine mobility partnership: giving people better access to work, learning, healthcare and community life; tackling rural isolation; helping local businesses; and supporting a greener future through reduced car dependency.

Finally, **Item 10**, our *Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan*, is the financial framework that makes all this delivery possible. Despite a very challenging national funding picture—and a continued, significant reliance on locally raised Council Tax—the proposed **2026/27 budget of £482.6m** protects essential services, prioritises our Council Plan commitments, and embeds the strategic investments we have just heard about. It includes substantial transformation, £18m in savings and efficiencies, and a responsible approach to risk and reserves. This is how we ensure financial sustainability

while still making progress on housing, the economy, community resilience and climate action.

Taken together, items 7 to 10 show a council that is **clear in its priorities, responsible in its decision-making**, and **ambitious for Dorset's future**. Whether it is reducing our carbon footprint, enabling more sustainable travel, rethinking rural mobility, or safeguarding our financial stability, these papers demonstrate how we are delivering—practically, transparently, and in partnership—for the residents and communities we serve.